

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The allowance of claims 27 – 38 and 46 – 49 is noted with appreciation.

Claim 42, which was indicated as being allowable, has been rewritten in independent form as claim 50. Therefore, it is believed that claim 50 is in condition for allowance.

Claim 43, which was indicated as being allowable, has been rewritten in independent form as claim 51. Claims 44 and 45 depend from claim 51. Therefore, it is believed that claim 51 and dependent claims 44 and 45 are in condition for allowance.

Independent claim 52 is directed to a vehicle steering column having an axially extending input shaft for connecting to a vehicle steering wheel. A housing at least partially encircles the input shaft. The housing includes first and second housing parts which are assembled together to form first and second axially spaced apart chambers which extend around the input shaft and have ribbed bottom surfaces. A first bearing assembly has an inner race connected with an input shaft and an outer race seated in the first chamber. A second bearing assembly has an inner race connected with the input shaft and an outer race seated in the second chamber.

In addition, claim 52 sets forth a first gasket as being disposed in the first chamber between the outer race of the first bearing assembly and the ribbed bottom of the first chamber. The first gasket has a plurality of annular ribs with

parallel circular crests. The crest of each rib on the first gasket is spaced from the crest of an adjacent rib on the first gasket.

Claim 52 also sets forth a second gasket as being disposed in the second chamber between the second bearing assembly and the ribbed bottom surface of the second chamber. The second gasket is disposed in engagement with the first and second housing parts. The second gasket has a plurality of annular ribs with parallel circular crests. The crests of each rib on the second gasket is spaced from the crest of an adjacent rib on the second gasket.

Claim 52 defines over the prior art, and particularly the patents to Venable, et al. (4,981,049) and Pfenninger, et al. (2,674,505) by setting forth the first gasket as having a plurality of annular ribs with parallel circular crests. The crest of each rib on the first gasket is spaced from the crest of an adjacent rib on the first gasket.

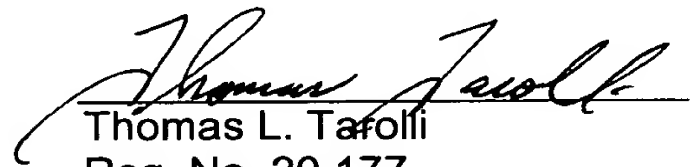
In the patent to Pfenninger, et al., the elastic material 22 has a single spiral rib which engages a single spiral rib or ridge 23 on the outer ring 17. The ribs or ridges 24 on the inner ring 18 of Pfenninger, et al. overlap the ribs or ridges 23 on the outer ring. Therefore, the ridges 23 and 24 are made in the form of a screw thread or spiral (see column 3, lines 45 – 55 of Pfenninger, et al.). If the outer ring 17 of Pfenninger, et al. was provided with a plurality of annular ribs, in the manner set forth in claim 52, it would be impossible to assemble the apparatus of Pfenninger, et al.

In addition, claim 52 defines over the prior art, particularly the patents to Venable, et al. and Pfenninger, et al., by setting forth the second gasket as having

a plurality of annular ribs with parallel circular crests. As was discussed in the immediately preceding paragraph, the apparatus of Pfenninger, et al. must be constructed with a spiral or screw thread configuration rather than an annular configuration with parallel circular crests.

In view of the foregoing remarks, it is believed to be clear that the claims clearly and patentably define over the prior art. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the claims be allowed and this application passed to issue. If for any reason the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner call applicant's attorneys in Cleveland, Ohio at 621-2234, area code 216. Please charge any deficiency in the fees for this application to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,


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